

August 2014

Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project

Bass Coast Shire Council vision for our community

Bass Coast Shire will be recognised as a unique place of environmental significance where our quality of life and sense of community is balanced by sustainable and sensitive development, population and economic growth'. (Council Plan 2013-2017)

Request

- A commitment to fund an independent economic, environmental and social impact study of the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project on the Bass Coast municipality – in particular Phillip Island.
- A commitment to fund an independent peer review of documentation being prepared by the Port of Hastings Development Authority to inform an Environmental Effects Statement.

Summary

The proposed expansion of the Port of Hastings is being led by the Port of Hastings Development Authority. The Authority has identified four project phases and is currently in the second stage, feasibility. This stage includes the environmental approvals process, informing a comprehensive impact statement.

Council is unwavering in its view that a balanced sustainable approach must be found to provide positive community outcomes and environment conservation of the natural assets. Council is seeking an outcome where the Project provides a net gain benefit to the environmental, social and economic prosperity of Bass Coast Shire.

To achieve clear and transparent evidence based decision making good governance practices must be upheld. Council believes there is an opportunity to increase and improve the governance arrangements currently in place.

Background

Bass Coast Shire's prosperity comes from its environment which, in turn, drives its economy through tourism and agriculture. The impacts of the proposed Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project on the environment are unknown at this early stage of the Project. Council acknowledges that, at this point in time, the impact assessment studies are yet to be completed, however, seeks to ensure it has a voice within the discussions and, as such, the ability to influence outcomes.

Bass Coast Shire Council values its relationship with State Government, however, must advocate for its community within the broader context of state and regional development.

In late May 2014, the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project was declared a "major transport project" under the *Major Transport Project Facilitation Act 2009*. The Act provides a streamlined approach to the assessment of significant transport infrastructure projects. The Container Expansion Project will continue to follow a structured assessment process, however, the scope for the assessment process will be set by the Minister for Planning and this will determine the studies undertaken. The feasibility studies are expected to be completed in 2017 to inform the Project direction.

Policy Position

Council is unwavering in its view that a balanced sustainable approach must be found to provide positive community outcomes and environment conservation of the natural assets. A balanced sustainable approach must be found between transport developments to meet the State's growing demand, and placement and maintenance of appropriate infrastructure to support tourism, recreation, business and social needs, whilst protecting natural flora and fauna habitat for species and environment conservation.

The development of the Project and the approval pathway under the Act provides little time and opportunity to influence the scoping documents determined by the Minister for Planning.

Council is advocating for its community to influence the direction and outcome of the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project feasibility stage through the following Principles and Objectives.

Principles

Council is committed to the following overarching principles to guide the development of the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project feasibility studies:

- The Project must achieve a net gain benefit to the environmental, social and economic prosperity of Bass Coast Shire
- Clear and transparent evidence based decision making;
- Recognition of Western Port's status as a Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance, and a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Biosphere Reserve
- Protection of significant environmental assets
- Infrastructure assets must be sustainable and have strategic justification and support service delivery
- Decisions regarding the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project feasibility studies are inclusive and made in good faith.

Objectives

Council has developed the following objectives to assist in the development, and delivery, of the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project feasibility studies:

- A State Government funded economic, environmental and social impact study of the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project be undertaken on the Bass Coast municipality
- A commitment from the State government to fund an independent peer review of the studies underway and the documentation being prepared by the Port of Hastings Development Authority to inform an Environmental Effects Statement, and be made publically available
- The scoping directions for the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project document be released for public comment
- The Comprehensive Impact Statement be publically exhibited for the maximum statutory time allowable providing greater opportunity for comment
- A new Shapiro style report (The Westernport Bay Environment Study) be commissioned, funded and completed by the State Government to inform the Project and a long-term management plan for Western Port prior to the Assessment Committee recommendation being made to the Minister for Planning
- That the Minister for Planning meet with Chair of the Western Port Biosphere Foundation Board to discuss the Biosphere Foundation and Western Port's sustainable development, and an open and transparent process for the Project.

Bass Coast Shire Council Strategic Policy Context

Council Plan 2013-2017

Bass Coast Shire Council, on behalf of our community, has identified its vision and key themes which will shape the future of our Shire. The Council Plan 2013-2017 recognises a range of natural environment, sustainable development and growth, and effective governance key strategic objectives addressing significant issues and emerging opportunities. From the Plan the following strategies provide guidance to this position paper:

- Facilitate appreciation of our unique natural environment through sustainable public access
- Improve the health of the landscape through increased biodiversity and indigenous vegetation protection
- Mitigate the forecast impacts of climate change by integrating the predictions into our decision making and planning for infrastructure, services and utilities
- Develop community partnerships that promote environmental awareness
- Provide infrastructure and facilities that are well managed, environmentally sustainable and are suitable for the community's needs

- Decrease the adverse environmental footprint of development
- Manage our financial resources, assets and risks to deliver the best possible outcomes for our community.

In Closing

Council welcomes the opportunity to be better informed regarding the Port of Hastings Container Expansion Project. This will then enable Council to form a considered opinion and approach to the Project, and make a decision for its community. Council values its continued involvement with the Port of Hastings Development Authority Council Advisory Group to influence discussion.